

# Employers For Childcare Trading

## Employee's Guide to Salary Sacrifice (Scheme Rules) Salary Sacrifice Childcare Voucher Scheme

### PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND RETAIN FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

Your company, in conjunction with Employers For Childcare Trading Limited, operates a scheme whereby you can sacrifice part of your salary in exchange for Childcare Vouchers and therefore **save money through Tax and National Insurance exemptions.**

**You are eligible for this scheme because you joined the Childcare Vouchers scheme through your employer prior to its closure to new entrants on 4 October 2018.**

The following is an outline of the Childcare Voucher scheme. The information is provided in a question and answer format.

If, after reading this document, you have any queries please contact:

**Email:** [hello@employersforchildcare.org](mailto:hello@employersforchildcare.org)  
**Tel:** 0800 028 3008

NOTE: Employers For Childcare Trading Limited recommends that employees who are in receipt of tax credits notify Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) when they register for Childcare Vouchers. You may also wish to contact our Family Benefits Advisors on Freephone helpline **0800 028 3008**.

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## Contents

General .....	2
Potential Savings .....	4
Pension, Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) & Statutory Shared Parental Pay .....	5
Tax Credits .....	7
Registering with Employers For Childcare Trading Limited and updating your salary sacrifice amount .....	8
Using the online Childcare Voucher system .....	9
Disclaimer .....	11

## General

### Q. What are Childcare Vouchers?

A. Childcare Vouchers are a method of paying for registered childcare. Childcare Vouchers up to a maximum of £243 per month (£55 per week) are exempt from tax and National Insurance Contributions (NICs), therefore offering savings for working parents who use registered childcare.

### Q. What does the term 'salary sacrifice' mean?

A. A 'salary sacrifice' occurs when an employee gives up part of their cash element of pay due under their contract of employment.

Under the Childcare Voucher scheme employees may 'sacrifice' part of their pay in exchange for Childcare Vouchers, with the potential to save money on tax and National Insurance Contributions. For further information, see 'Salary Sacrifice Questions and Answers' on the HMRC website at: <https://www.gov.uk/salary-sacrifice-and-the-effects-on-pay> .

### Q. What are E-vouchers?

A. E-vouchers are an online virtual Childcare Voucher system that employees have access to. This account holds their Childcare Voucher amount. Employees instruct Employers For Childcare Trading Limited to transfer payments to their chosen childcare provider via the online account. This system works in a similar way to online banking.

### Q. Can I receive Childcare Vouchers for any child?

A. Childcare Vouchers can be received to pay for registered childcare for a qualifying child. As per HMRC guidelines, the child will qualify:

- Until 1 September following their 15th birthday, or
- Until 1 September following their 16th birthday, if they are registered disabled

Your employer or voucher provider may ask you for the child's date of birth or birth certificate, or whether the child is disabled.

The child must be:

- Your child
- Your stepchild, or
- A child who lives with you and for whom you have parental responsibility.

Parental responsibility means that you have the same legal rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority as a parent for the child and the child's property. If you are not the parent, your employer may ask you what your relationship is to the child.

### Q. Am I restricted to the type of childcare I choose by using Childcare Vouchers?

A. Childcare Vouchers can be used to pay for all forms of registered childcare. Registered childcare means that the childcare provider is registered with the appropriate registering body and meets the requirements of the relevant National Standards. This includes registered childminders, day nurseries, crèches, play-groups, afterschool and breakfast clubs and holiday schemes.

Childcare Vouchers can be used to pay for more than one form of registered childcare, e.g. if you use more than one type of childcare for one child, and/or if you use different childcare providers for a number of children.

**Q. Will my childcare provider accept Childcare Vouchers as payment?**

**A.** Most childcare providers are happy to accept Childcare Vouchers although it is your responsibility to contact your childcare provider to check.

If they have any queries about the scheme, they can contact Employers For Childcare on 028 9267 8200.

**Q. Is there a limit to the amount of Childcare Vouchers I can purchase?**

**A.** The amount you can purchase is dependent on your tax band. You may be able to purchase up to a maximum of £243 per month (£55 per week) which will be free from tax and NIC. The maximum exemption is per employee, therefore both parents can purchase Childcare Vouchers and potentially make a double saving.

For some employees, the amount of vouchers you are able to purchase may be limited to ensure your gross monthly salary does not fall below £988 per month (Income Tax allowance for 2018/2019) and the National Minimum wage. Alternatively, you may be restricted in the amount of vouchers you can take due to the Income Tax band you fall into. All employees are subject to a basic earnings assessment which will determine the level at which they can sacrifice. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employer-supported-childcare> for more information.

	<b>Tax 20%</b>	<b>Tax 40%</b>	<b>Tax 45%</b>
<b>Max amount that can be sacrificed</b>	<b>£243</b>	<b>£124</b>	<b>£110</b>

**Q. What if I change my childcare provider?**

**A.** If you change your childcare provider you must notify Employers For Childcare Trading Limited by changing these details on your online account. If you are unable to do this, contact Employers For Childcare Trading Limited who will then update the details on your account.

## Potential Savings

**Q. How much could I save under the scheme?**

**A.** Employees participating in the Childcare Voucher scheme are exempt from Tax and National Insurance Contributions on the value of the vouchers purchased, therefore the savings you make will depend on your salary and the National Insurance Contribution (NIC) rates you pay (may be different in Scotland):

MAXIMUM MONTHLY SAVINGS		
	Max amount that can be sacrificed per month	Total Monthly Saving
Tax 20% NIC 12%	£243	£77.76
Tax 40% NIC 2%	£124	£52.08
Tax 45% NIC 2%	£110	£51.70

**Q. If an employee joined the scheme before 6 April 2011, are there any restrictions if they want to opt out and then join again at a later date sacrificing up to the full amount (£243) each month?**

**A.** Before 6 April 2011 all employees could sacrifice up to £243 per month. After this date each new joiner's salary sacrifice eligibility depends on their tax bracket. All basic rate tax payers (20%) can sacrifice up to £243 per month, higher rate tax payers (40%) can sacrifice up to £124 per month.

Higher rate tax payers who joined the Childcare Voucher scheme before 6 April 2011 are still able to sacrifice up to a maximum of £243 per month. Employees who fall into this category can opt out of the scheme for up to one year and can rejoin again sacrificing up to £243 per month.

**Q. Am I able to get any unused vouchers refunded?**

**A.** A reimbursement can be made up to the value of vouchers in your account, subject to certain rules. Neither Employers For Childcare Trading Limited nor your employer can reimburse vouchers already redeemed.

Please note that this is a contractual agreement and is entirely at your employer's discretion. To receive a reimbursement, employees should either request this online or complete a 'Reimbursement Request Form' and return it to your **HR or Payroll department**. Your employer will then forward it to Employers For Childcare Trading Limited, and a refund will be issued within 6 weeks. The refund will be made payable to your employer, and payment will be made to you through payroll to ensure that your current rate of Tax and NI is applied.

Please discuss this with your payroll/HR department.

**EMPLOYEES SHOULD REFER TO YOUR EMPLOYER'S POLICY ON REIMBURSEMENTS**

## Pension, Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) & Statutory Shared Parental Pay

**Q. Will my pension be affected?**

**A.** Your pension may be affected.

### State Pensions

The basic state pension is calculated on the number of **years** NICs are paid, not the amount, therefore as long as contributions do not fall below the minimum amount (Lower Earnings Limit) while buying Childcare Vouchers, the state pension will not be affected.

An individual's State Second Pension/Additional State Pension may be affected as the amount of national insurance contributions will be reduced. However, if an individual only sacrifices pay for a short period their contribution history will only be affected for that period, so the effect on their pension benefit entitlement will be minimal.

### Occupational Pension Scheme

**EMPLOYEES SHOULD REFER TO YOUR EMPLOYER'S OCCUPATIONAL PENSION SCHEME.**

**Q. Will entering the scheme affect Statutory Sick Pay, Statutory Maternity Pay or Statutory Shared Parental Pay?**

**A. Statutory Sick Pay**

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) cannot be sacrificed. In the event that you have no salary above SSP you will not be able to avail of Childcare Vouchers. You will **ONLY** be able to sacrifice salary over and above your SSP in exchange for Childcare Vouchers.

Employees on enhanced sick pay (i.e. enhanced SSP and an additional payment on top) can continue to receive Childcare Vouchers during periods of sickness, providing they have sufficient salary above SSP to cover the value of the vouchers. If they wish not to receive the Childcare Vouchers during sickness, they can opt out online or else an Opting Out Form must be completed and returned to the employer.

**EMPLOYEES SHOULD REFER TO YOUR EMPLOYER'S POLICY ON SICK PAY.**

### Statutory Maternity Pay

If you:

- are, or become, pregnant
- And are taking Childcare Vouchers through salary sacrifice
- And are only entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)

It is advisable that you opt out of the scheme 23 weeks before the baby is due (i.e. week 17 of the pregnancy), and opt in again 15 weeks before the baby is due (i.e. week 26 of the pregnancy).

This 8 week period is known as the 'qualifying or set' period and earnings during this period will be used to determine SMP.

Childcare Vouchers are not recognised as income during the 'qualifying or set' period so the lower earnings would be used to calculate your entitlement to SMP for the first 6 weeks.

Please discuss this with your payroll/HR department.

**EMPLOYEES SHOULD REFER TO YOUR EMPLOYER'S POLICY ON STATUTORY & OCCUPATIONAL MATERNITY PAY.**

Statutory Shared Parental Leave Pay

If an employee has a child born on or after 5 April 2015, or adopt a child after this date, then they may be entitled to Shared Parental Leave.

Shared Parental Leave means that your employee and their partner could choose to be at home together or to work at different times and share the care of their child during the first year.

Additional Paternity Leave and Pay will no longer be available for children born on or after 5 April as this has been replaced by Shared Parental Leave and Pay.

ShPP is paid at the rate of £145.18 a week or 90 % of your average weekly earnings, whichever is lower. This is the same as Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) except that during the first six weeks SMP is paid at 90% of whatever you earns (with no maximum).

Any Contractual/Enhanced Maternity pay will normally end when you transfer to ShPP, however this is at the discretion of the employer. If you are solely in receipt of ShPP, then this cannot be sacrificed for the purposes of childcare vouchers.

Note that these figures apply to the 2018/19 Tax Year and are subject to annual adjustment.

**EMPLOYEES SHOULD REFER TO YOUR EMPLOYER'S POLICY ON STATUTORY SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE.**

- Q. What happens to Childcare Vouchers when I am on maternity, paternity or shared parental leave?**
- A.** Childcare Vouchers are a non-cash benefit in the same way as mobile phones and company cars. For advice and clarification on how this affects employees who are in the scheme before they go off on maternity or shared parental leave call our Family Benefits Advice Service on **0800 028 3008**.

## Tax Credits

**Q. Will my Tax Credits or Universal Credit be affected?**

**A.** Childcare Vouchers can affect entitlements to Tax Credits or Universal Credit because Childcare Vouchers are not counted as income for Tax Credit or Universal Credit purposes. Therefore your circumstances are affected in two ways:

- Your income for Tax Credit or Universal Credit purposes will be reduced by the amount of pay you have given up in return for the benefit.
- Your eligible childcare costs for Tax Credit or Universal Credit purposes will reduce as they must only include costs you pay yourself – the amount you pay through Childcare Vouchers is not included.

If you do not know whether Childcare Vouchers continues to be the best form of support for you, contact our Family Benefits Advice Service on Freephone **0800 028 3008**.

Please also see the HMRC document entitled 'Working Tax Credit – Help with the costs of childcare' - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-tax-credit-help-with-the-costs-of-childcare-wtc5>.

## Registering with Employers For Childcare Trading Limited and updating your salary sacrifice amount

### Q. How can I register with Employers For Childcare Trading Limited?

- A. You register online by completing the steps in the email that will have been sent to you when your employer registered with Employers For Childcare Trading Limited. You must register online unless your employer has a different process or you have specific accessibility requirements.

*Note that the Childcare Voucher scheme closed to new entrants on 4 October 2018. Parents who are currently using Childcare Vouchers may need to register with Employers For Childcare Trading Limited if their employer has switched Childcare Voucher provider company.*

Then follow instructions for registering online at [www.efcvouchers.com](http://www.efcvouchers.com).

### Q. How do I let my employer know the value of vouchers I require each month?

- A. If using the online portal, employees will be required to state the amount they wish to sacrifice from their salary each month and agree to the terms and conditions. Otherwise, employees must complete the 'Opting In Form'. This form confirms an individual's agreement to 'sacrifice' part of their salary in exchange for Childcare Vouchers and confirms the value of vouchers the employee will receive each month.

### Q. What if I need to change the value of Childcare Vouchers I receive?

- A. This can either be done online or offline. If online, employees can simply adjust the amount they are sacrificing on their online account. If offline, employees will need to complete a new 'Opting In Form' and return it to their employer for processing.

### Q. What if I do not want to receive Childcare Vouchers anymore?

- A. If you wish to opt out of the scheme, please do so online or complete an 'Opting Out Form'. The 'Opting Out Form' is available by emailing [business@employersforchildcare.org](mailto:business@employersforchildcare.org).

A period of inactivity for 52 weeks will be counted as opting out by HMRC even if you have not completed an opting out form.

### Q. Can I authorise a third party to have access to my online account with Employers For Childcare Trading Limited?

- A. Yes. Employers For Childcare Trading Limited can provide access to a third party, e.g. a spouse, if you complete a Third Party Access Agreement Form and return it to Employers For Childcare Trading Limited.

NOTE: The third party will be required to answer security questions relating to the account when contacting Employers For Childcare Trading Limited.



## Using the online Childcare Voucher system

### Q. How do I use the Employers For Childcare Trading Limited - E-voucher system?

A. When you register with Employers For Childcare Trading Limited you will be issued with a username, password and PIN enabling you to pay your childcare provider. Your account can be accessed at [www.efcvouchers.com](http://www.efcvouchers.com) or by using our 24 hour telephone redemption line 028 92660479.

A complete user guide is available upon request. Please contact Employers for Childcare Trading Limited to obtain a copy.

### Q. What if I forget my password?

A. Providing you have supplied us with an email address, you will be able to reset your own password by selecting the “forgot password” option on the log in page.

### Q. When will my account be credited with the voucher amount?

A. Once your employer has made the payment and the order has been processed, your account will be credited within two business days.

### Q. How do I make payments to my childcare provider?

A. When you are ready to pay your childcare provider simply go to the ‘Payments’ page and instruct Employers For Childcare Trading Limited to issue payment, as full or part payment of your childcare costs, to your chosen childcare provider. All instructions received before 3pm daily are processed on the same day and payment will be in the childcare provider’s bank account within 3 working days. Payments received after 3pm will be processed the next working day.

You also have the option to set up a standing order.

#### NOTE:

- Employers For Childcare Trading Limited will email each employee when their voucher account has been credited.

### Q. What if I don’t have access to the internet?

A. An automated telephone redemption line is also available 24/7. On this line you can access your balance and instruct Employers For Childcare Trading Limited to transfer payment to your childcare provider. The telephone Redemption Line is 028 9266 0479.

### Q. What are the advantages and features of the E-voucher system?

ADVANTAGES TO EMPLOYEE
• Simple and easy to use
• 24/7 online and telephone access to account information
• Standing Order facility
• Easy tracking of transactions
• Multi-childcare provider options
• Not subject to variations on postal service, or loss of vouchers
• Fast payments

#### ADDITIONAL FEATURES OF E-VOUCHERS

- You can set up reminders to remind you to make payment to your childcare provider or remind you of special dates/occasions
- Frequently Asked Questions
- You can send a message to Employers For Childcare Trading Limited
- Your childcare provider can view a history of payments on their own account

**Q. I am leaving my current employer and starting a new job with a different employer. What happens to my remaining Childcare Vouchers?**

**A.** Employees' accounts will remain active so that they can continue paying their registered childcare providers with the vouchers remaining in the account.

Should an employee not wish to use their remaining vouchers, it is the employee's responsibility to ensure they request a reimbursement prior to their last working day. However please note that this is a contractual agreement and is entirely at the discretion of the employer. To receive a reimbursement, employees should request this online or else complete a 'Reimbursement Request Form' and return it to HR or Payroll who authorise and forward it to Employers For Childcare Trading Limited, and a reimbursement will be issued.

The Reimbursement Form is available by emailing [vouchers@employersforchildcare.org](mailto:vouchers@employersforchildcare.org).

The reimbursement will be made payable to the employer who can then make payment to the employee through payroll and will be subject to the employee's current rate of tax and NIC.

Childcare Vouchers are issued under the Terms and Conditions of your contract of employment with your employer and cannot be transferred to a new employer.

Because Childcare Vouchers closed to new entrants on 4 October 2018, you will be unable to join a Childcare Voucher scheme with your new employer, unless the change is a result of a business merger or takeover and as such is protected under the TUPE or COSOP regulations.

## Disclaimer

- Every effort has been made to ensure the information provided is factually correct. However, it is up to you to decide whether it is beneficial for you to avail of the Childcare Voucher scheme.
- All individual members of staff are advised to consider their own circumstances before reaching a decision on whether or not to continue availing of the Childcare Voucher scheme.
- Employers For Childcare Trading Limited cannot be held liable for content as HMRC regulations are subject to change and may have an impact on the content of the guide.
- You may also wish to contact the HMRC for advice and information. Details are available on the website at the following address: <https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/tax-credits> .